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SUBJECT: WARDAK PROVINCE WARILY ENGAGING IN AFGHAN PUBLIC PROTECTION PROGRAM

REF: A. KABUL 897
[B. KABUL 937](#)

[¶](#)1. (SBU) Begin Summary. The pilot Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3) is slowly taking shape with its first Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF) deployed in Jalrez District in Wardak Province. The creation of the Afghan-led force is proving to be a slow process, but one designed to build a long-term commitment by the local population for the program.

Recruiting for the second training class from the Nerkh District has proven difficult, resulting in the postponement of the start date for the class as the Wardak governor and U.S. military engage local Afghan elders and leaders. A key vulnerability of the AP3 will be its sustainability, both because to be sustainable it must rely on the Ministry of Interior (MoI) for APPF salaries and equipment, and because it is seen by some in the Afghan National Police (ANP) as undermining ANP funding and authorities. Additionally, public perceptions of the AP3 are mixed and continue to be shaped through local shuras and engagement with leaders; most leaders likely will remain wary until the program proves it can meet its promise of increased security. The Taliban is expected to test the APPF early in an effort to undermine confidence in the program, and it remains to be seen whether the ANP will work cooperatively with the APPF when these tests present themselves. End Summary.

Background

[¶](#)2. (SBU) The pilot AP3 is slowly taking shape with its first APPF deployed in Jalrez District in Wardak Province. The AP3 is designed as an Afghan program, run by the Ministry of Interior (MoI), with its recruits selected with the full approval of the provincial governor and the community councils established by the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG). The APPF is not intended to be a "tribal" or "militia" force, but an Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) organization providing community-based security. If successful, the AP3 will supplement the Afghan National Police (ANP) and provide enhanced security to extend the legitimate governance of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) to designated districts in key provinces. The program's implementation will hinge on the Afghans themselves and key local government elements, particularly the Operational Command Center-Provincial (OCC-P), the District Community Council, and the ANSF, who will lead the AP3 with Special Forces (SF) elements training, advising and assisting through the initial phases of each class of APPF deployment. SF also provides initial quick impact project support and assessment for long term development of the AP3 Districts. The program seeks to gain and maintain popular support for the APPF through coordinated and synchronized distribution of humanitarian and quick impact projects followed by long term development programs in

districts that agree to provide recruits for the program. These activities will be transferred based on conditions to the conventional unit battle space owner during the hold phase in each district.

¶3. (SBU) Special Forces (SF) and CJTF-101 have constructed five effects and associated measures of effectiveness to track the success of the AP3. These measures will be reviewed periodically and refined as necessary. The current effects measurements include enhancing the GIROA legitimacy in Wardak by: preventing emergence of an insurgent popular support base, protecting the population from insurgent attacks, preventing insurgent influence on the population, disrupting insurgent freedom of action, and protecting the freedom of movement of friendly forces.

First APPF Deploys in Jalrez

¶4. (SBU) The first 243 trainees completed their 21 day training course on March 26 and returned to Jalrez District in Wardak shortly thereafter. Significantly, Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) 101 reported that all trainees reported for duty after the course. The same is not always the case for Afghan National Police (ANP) trainees. Since their arrival in Jalrez, the APPF has integrated into the district and completed a communications exercise to test their alert plan.

Additional exercises are expected. A more important measurement of the APPF integration and utility, however, will come when they are called upon to respond to an attack and whether they stay the course.

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Public Perception

¶5. (SBU) Local leaders remain wary of the AP3 and are likely to be convinced to support it only when the program demonstrates it can meet its promise of increased security. Pashtun leaders have been particularly suspicious of the program. Pashtun elders from Khost, Paktia, Paktika, and Wardak told Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP) Holbrooke that the AP3 is arming, rather than disarming, local groups and its participants are picked by local commanders rather than the tribes, with the result that the AP3 does not enhance community policing.

¶6. (SBU) A key element of U.S. efforts to shape the support for the AP3 program is civilian assistance and communications. On the ground, the military has been using its Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds to undertake quick impact projects in the Jalrez District, has engaged in consistent messaging through shuras and other leadership discussions to highlight that the APPF is a GIROA project, and has provided equipment to the APPF to demonstrate to incoming recruits the commitment of the GIROA to the AP3. For example, humanitarian assistance was distributed in Jalrez in conjunction with the return of the APPF class, and a radio station was opened at that time in the provincial capital. (Note: One issue is the provision of funds to the MoI; because CERP funds may not be provided to the MoI, the military is looking at the use of Title 22 ASF funds for foreign assistance and reconstruction.) Additionally, a key element of assuring the APPF remains an Afghan program is the acceptance of local governance. This is proving more challenging in Wardak since the PRT is Turkish led. Not only has Turkey made clear it will not participate in the AP3, but the Turkish PRT spends less effort on governance capacity building. To off-set this issue, CJTF-101 has undertaken added steps to directly engage with provincial and district officials.

Expanding the AP3 to Nerkh

¶7. (SBU) While CSTC-A has the logistics in place for a second class of students from the Nerkh District of Wardak Province, the numbers of recruits continue to rise as coalition forces, during clearing operations, meet with success in Nerkh and the surrounding areas. The target number for the course is 250 students, but an original list of 200 students was reduced to 30 names, likely as a result of the Nerkh District Administrator pulling the names due to intense Taliban activity. Given the lack of registered students, the start date for the training session has been pushed back. Coalition forces are carrying out routine shaping and clearing operations in Nerkh District. While the AP3 is not the genesis for these operations, the operations will enhance the perception of the GIRoA to increase APPF recruitment. According to a weekly AP3 update by CJTF 101, the battle space owner in Nerkh reported that the district is clear enough to promote the introduction of AP3 into the area, and the next step is to return to additional shaping operations to promote public support with and through the governor so that local elders and leaders will provide a list of candidates for the next AP3 course. Discussions are underway as to which district will be the third, Chak or Sayyidabad. As with Jalrez, the location and sequencing of the APPF is set by the governor; this local ownership of the program is essential to its success.

Sustainability a Challenge

¶8. (SBU) The key vulnerability of the AP3 is its sustainability as a force. Especially problematic is the will and capability of the MoI to maintain the program. From the logistical standpoint, in addition to chronic graft and corruption, the MoI's inability to regularly pay the ANP is a serious problem. Since the APPF will be paid monthly by the MoI using the same system as the ANP, a failure to pay APPF salaries could bring an early break-down in the AP3. The goal remains ensuring that AP3 is an Afghan-led program, therefore it is imperative to ensure that systems for funding and logistic support for both the APPF and ANP are set in place at the national level of the MoI. If this does not occur, the U.S. will be ensnared into sustaining the program or watching it fail through lack of GIRoA ability to effectively manage its security forces. An additional challenge is the fact the APPF falls under the ANP.

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(Comment: The ANP tashkil is limited to 82,000 with 81,000 currently on the books. Increases in the AP3 will push the numbers of the ANP beyond the authorized limit. Who is responsible for paying salaries over the next year has yet to be resolved. While APP forces are currently being paid with MoI funds, Minister Atmar expects that the Law and Order Trust Fund (LOTFA) will soon assume responsibility and reimburse the MoI. The international community is currently divided over whether or the use of the LOTFA to fund what some view as a risky pilot program is appropriate. End Comment.) In Jalrez, this poses particular problems since the ANP have not gone through reform training. CJTF is working with CSTC-A to get the Jalrez ANP into a Focused District Development (FDD) program on 19 April and provide them with better equipment. This should help reduce the chances of the ANP strong-arming the APPF for their equipment.

UK and Canadian Officials Worry About APPF in RC-South

¶9. (SBU) During an embassy roundtable discussion on April 16 regarding issues relating to RC-South, UK and Canadian officials expressed concerns about rushing to establish an APPF in Kandahar or Helmand. They noted that the test conditions in Wardak are not the same as in the south since the population is mostly Pashtun, unlike the multiple ethnic groups in Wardak. They also expressed concern about the resource-intensive nature of the AP3, which has required a major outlay of personnel and funding by U.S. Special Forces,

the MoI, and the ANA. They said the ANA simply does not have the troops to spare for the AP3. (Comment: The ANA and MOD do not pay additional costs as a result of the AP3, nor do the ANA participate in the program. The ANA supports security operations when required to help establish the conditions to allow the ANP and the APPF to take over the "hold" mission from the ANA. End Comment.) U.S. officials noted that the AP3 is a pilot program, limited to Wardak Province, but the UK and Canadian officials pushed back noting that MoI Minister Atmar has stated publicly his desire to see the APPF replicated in the south. Rather, they recommended that more effort be invested in the ANP, including training and an increase in the tashkil level.

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